

LANCE CPL. BRIAN KESTER  
STAFF WRITER

He was once a sailor. Now, he is a Marine.

This dramatic change in lifestyle has taken Sgt. James D. Clarke, drill instructor, Platoon 2018, Fox Company, 2nd RTBn., from a life aboard an attack submarine to turning recruits into Marines.

Clarke readies recruits for their Marine Corps career through his experience, work ethic, maturity and fearlessness in goal accomplishment.

He was born in Twentynine Palms, Calif., the son of a Marine. It seemed Clarke's life was destined for the Corps from the beginning, although his career did not start that way.

"I had always planned on joining the Marine Corps," said Clarke. "However when I was about to graduate from high school I got a letter about the Navy Nuclear Power Program. They said they had looked at my grades, and I was interested in science, so I made a split decision. I joined the Navy, where I served the next six years as a nuclear machinist's mate."

After joining the Navy in October 1988, Clarke went on to his first duty station.

"I finished all of my nuclear training and was then stationed in Charleston on an attack submarine for a little [more than] four years," he said.

Clarke served his term of service on active duty and followed that up with a two-year stint in the Naval reserves.

"During that time I was in a Seabee unit, which is kind of the equivalent of a combat engineer for the Navy," said Clarke. "The Seabees worked out in the field with heavy equipment, and we did a lot of training with Marines. That was something that really started making me think seriously about the Marine Corps."

The exposure to Marine Corps training and camaraderie awakened Clarke's past and prior goal he had not yet attained.

"The Marines really liked the Seabees," he said. "Half of the unit were former Marine Corps grunts. I heard Marine Corps stories all the time and that's when I started thinking about going back on active duty, joining the Marine Corps, and hopefully getting on an air wing."

In 1997, armed with experience and

# Sailor joins Corps

## After serving 8 years in the Navy, Marine follows in father's yellow footprints



Lance Cpl. Brian Kester  
**Sergeant James D. Clarke, drill instructor for Platoon 2018, Fox Co., 2nd RTBn., inspects his recruits' rifles to ensure that there are no rounds remaining in them at Chosin Range Monday. Clarke's Marine Corps career began after serving eight years in the Navy as a nuclear machinist's mate.**

maturity, Clarke set out on a new journey into the Marine Corps with the emotional, and somewhat tentative, support from his family.

"Going into boot camp, my dad had some misgivings," said Clarke. "He asked me quite a few times, 'Is this what you think you ought to be doing at 27 years old?'"

Though he was a 27-year-old recruit, Clarke excelled in recruit training and went from being a squad leader to graduating as the guide.

"[Being in the Navy] prepared me as far as knowing the chain of command and knowing the importance of the chain of command," he said. "So coming into the Marine Corps wasn't that big of a shock. Although boot camp

was drastically different than Navy boot camp, all I had to do was polish up a few areas."

He had gotten a foundation from somewhere, and surely he got some of that from the Navy, said Staff Sgt. Justin A. Forbes, drill instructor, Platoon 2018, Fox Company, 2nd RTBn.

"I'm sure the Navy gave him some kind of qualities," said Forbes. "He's a little bit older too, a little bit more mature, that had something to do with his success so far."

Overcoming hardships in boot camp is one hurdle, but out of boot camp he was again faced with the adversity and demands of his age.

"I went from being a [petty officer

first class] to being a private first class," said Clarke. "That [was tough], but I feel better knowing what it felt like being a Pfc. or a lance corporal in the Marine Corps instead of starting as a corporal or whatever."

Those kinds of experiences are what lured Clarke to the Marine Corps in the first place.

"I liked the more military experience of the Marine Corps," said Clarke. "The Navy is the military and they have a job to do, but the Marine Corps is more what you think of as far as armies go."

Forbes witnesses the adaptation Clarke made from his Naval background to the Marine Corps way of life on a daily basis.

"He doesn't really make reference to it much," said Forbes. "As far as Navy-wise, I don't think he really displays much of that. He is pretty knowledgeable about the Marine Corps and puts forth more of a Marine Corps attitude."

Firmly entrenched in his new world, Clarke set out to succeed in his new job-aviation hydraulics.

"The two jobs were a lot the same," said Clarke. "They are both really technical, and you have a lot of people double-checking that the job is done correctly. If things aren't done right, then the consequences of failure could be really bad. A pilot could crash or, when I was in the Navy, something bad could happen to the reactor."

Clarke seems to thrive on working under extreme circumstances. He exhibits the dedication it takes to do the job proficiently and with speed.

"I think being in the Navy for a time has made me a better Marine," he said. "I have seen the way the Navy operates. They always get their job done, but they don't get it done as efficiently or as quickly as the Marine Corps. There was not as much consequence to not doing what you were supposed to do."

When reflecting on his change of career, Clarke is satisfied with his achievements.

"It has been a success for me in pretty much every direction," he said. "So I feel really good about the decision I made."

When it comes to training recruits, Forbes agrees that Clarke made a sound decision and sees many admirable traits.

"He is a hard worker and is not afraid to do things that he doesn't really know," said Forbes. "He's not afraid to ask questions or put his own spin on things. He is a very well-rounded Marine who is very knowledgeable and is constantly out working with the recruits."

That constant work is due to a sense of accountability Clarke holds as a drill instructor.

"If they are not trained this way and they are not taught that this is how it is supposed to be done, then I feel like I'm doing my part to allow the Marine Corps to become a little bit more diluted," said Clarke. "There is a real sense of responsibility in that."

## LEAGUE,

Continued from Page 1

Garland, who came up with the idea to charter a detachment, also came up with the idea for the name. He said he had heard of detachment names like Iron Mike, Iwo Jima and Chesty Puller, but wanted a name that would set them apart from the rest. Thus, the idea for the Yellow Footprints Detachment was born.

"One of the most important things people see about making Marines is the yellow footprints," he said. "Even if they don't make it

through training and they're sent home, I can't think of anybody who would ever forget those yellow footprints."

Garland said the detachment will continue to accept members and, since the detachment has been officially chartered, there will most likely be a significant increase in interest and membership.

Membership into the MCL is open to all active duty and reserve Marines with at least 90 days of service, including retired and honorably discharged Marines, as well as Navy corpsmen who have served with the Fleet Marine Force.

The MCL was formed to provide camaraderie and assistance to Marines and their survivors, preserve the traditions and promote the interests of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Garland said the detachment has already begun its community involvement, starting with the Adopt-a-Highway program. Volunteers will pick up trash along a two-mile stretch of highway, beginning at Parris Island Gateway and ending at Shell Point.

The detachment also plans to visit hospitalized veterans, participate in parades, sponsor Toys for Tots and other community programs, as well as serve as hosts for visiting MCL and Young Marines detachments, said Garland.

Another goal Garland hopes to accomplish within the first year is for the detachment to garner enough funds to sponsor a college scholarship for family members of Marines and league members.

"I am taken aback at the generosity and the esprit de corps the Marine Corps League has," said Garland. "The Marine Corps League is the epitome of Marines taking care of their own. I really believe that the establishment of a Marine Corps League here will not only serve the community, but be able to enhance morale and provide benefits to the Marines and their families here."

To learn more about the Yellow Footprints Detachment, or to become a member, contact Garland at 228-3165.

## Senator Graham pays Depot a visit ...



Maj. Kenneth D. White  
**Senator Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., tours the new officer housing with Col. Michael A. Malachowsky, Depot Chief of Staff, and Col. John Valentin, Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation and Logistics, during a visit to the Tri-Command Sunday. Senator Graham was in Beaufort to receive a brief on Public/Private Venture and newly-constructed housing.**